DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 032 IR 015 769

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TITLE Channel One News in the Classroom: Does It Make a Difference?
PUB DATE Feb 92
NOTE 6p.; In: Proceedings of Selected Research and Development Presentations at the Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology and Sponsored by the Research and Theory Division; see IR 015 706.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; Commercial Television; Comparative Analysis; Correlation; *Current Events; *Educational Television; Intermediate Grades; *Locational Skills (Social Studies); *News Media; *Programing (Broadcast); School Surveys; Secondary Education; Student Attitudes; Tables (Data); Teacher Attitudes; *Television Commercials
IDENTIFIERS *Channel One; Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of Channel One programming (i.e., television news/information programs directed toward students ages 12 to 18) on students and teachers in a school district in Minnesota. Primary objectives of the study were to: (1) determine if a correlation exists between the reception of Channel One programming and knowledge of current events; (2) determine if a correlation exists between the reception of Channel One programming and ability to position U.S. locations on an outline map; and (3) assess attitudes toward Channel One commercials. An experimental group of 449 students in grades 6 through 12 and 27 teachers from 3 public school receiving Channel One and a control group of 404 students and 25 teachers from 3 public schools not receiving Channel One were surveyed. Identical surveys testing knowledge of current events and U.S. geography were administered to all participants, and an attitude survey on commercials was administered to the experimental group. Results indicated that Channel One programming has a positive impact on geography skills and that commercials are tolerated as a part of the packaging. A positive impact on knowledge of current events was also found, although this finding was not statistically significant. The report includes several data tables. (MES)

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Title:

Channel One News in the Classroom: Does It Make a Difference?

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Introduction

A recent development in secondary education in the United States has been the production and delivery of television news/information programs specifically directed towards students between the ages of 12 and 18. These shows are designed to be delivered to the students during the school day. In most cases programming is made available without cost to the schools. The Whittle Corporation with its Channel One programming has been one of the major contributors to this development. Channel One is unique in that the the television sets, video recorders and other supporting equipment are also provided at no cost to the schools. The costs of producing and delivering the ten minutes of daily news and information, the equipment located in each school, and the supporting programming and materials are covered through the sale of advertising spots embedded in the news program.

Since its beginning in 1989-1990, Channel One has been controversial in the educational community. A great deal of debate concerning the impact such a program might have on students and schools has ensued. Because it is a new approach in education, very little research data has been available upon which to base decisions. With little objective data with which to work the debates have often been marked by emotional stands on both sides of the issue. Many national organizations related to education have publicly opposed the use of Channel One in schools. Meanwhile, the Whittle Corporation and other supporters have pointed to information largely gathered by the Whittle Corporation itself, that shows the programming is effective and is well received at the local level.

Research Questions

This paper describes the results of a year long study that examined the impact of Channel One on students and teachers in a school district in Minnesota. The students and teachers were assessed on their knowledge of current events and United States geography. The results were compared to those of students in similar schools in Minnesota but which had not been receiving the Channel One programming. In addition, the study attempted to assess student and teacher reactions and attitudes toward the commercials on Channel One.

The primary objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine if a correlation exists between the reception and non-reception of Channel One programming in the schools on student's general knowledge of national and world current events.
2. Determine if a correlation exists between the reception and non-reception of Channel One programming in the schools on student's ability to correctly position United States locations on an outline map.
3. Assess the attitude of students towards Channel One commercials.

Sample

Four hundred forty-nine students in grades 6 through 12 from three Minnesota public schools receiving Channel One were selected as the experimental group. Four hundred four students in grades 6 through 12 from three Minnesota public schools not receiving Channel One were selected as the control group. Care was taken to match the schools as to size and socioeconomic base of the community. Media specialists and teachers in the respective schools selected intact classes of students for participation in the study.

In addition, fifty-two teachers from the same schools were included in the study. Twenty-seven of the teachers were from the schools in the experimental group and

the remaining twenty-five teachers were from the schools in the control group. All teachers volunteered to participate in the study.

Methodology

Students and teachers in the experimental and control groups were administered identical written surveys to assess their knowledge of national and world information. Participants were asked to respond to ten multiple choice questions concerning recent events in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Questions were written based upon information available from local newspapers, newsmagazines, and radio and television news programs. Questions were written only on information or events available from at least two sources other than Channel One. The surveys were administered by the regular classroom teacher. Because of the content of the questions all surveys were administered within a three day time period.

The surveys also included an outline map of the United States and a list of four states plus Washington, D. C. Participants were instructed to mark the location of each state or city on the map.

In addition, the students and the teachers in the experimental group were assessed on their attitudes toward the commercials contained in the Channel One news show. They were asked to mark on a five point likert-like scale their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Results

Students in the experimental group were able to accurately position significantly more U.S. locations than students in the control group. There was also a tendency for the students in the experimental group to answer more questions correctly on the test of general knowledge than the students in the control group, although this finding was not significant at the .05 level.

Table 1: Experimental vs. Control Students

	Experimental Mean (n=449)	Control Mean (n=404)	t Value	Probability
General Knowledge	5.3	4.8	1.95	.052
U. S. Locations	3.5	3.0	5.62	.000

As expected, there was no significant difference between the test scores for the teachers in the experimental group as compared to the teachers in the control group. Also as expected, the teachers scored significantly higher on the general knowledge questions and positioning U. S. locations than the students.

Table 2: Experimental vs. Control Teachers

	Experimental Mean (n=27)	Control Mean (n=25)	t Value	Probability
General Knowledge	7.8	7.9	.11	.914
U. S. Locations	4.6	4.8	.69	.494

Table 3: Experimental Teachers vs. Experimental Students

	Teachers Mean (n=27)	Students Mean (n=449)	t Value	Probability
General Knowledge	7.8	5.3	2.45	.014
U. S. Locations	4.6	3.5	4.02	.000

Table 4: Control Teachers vs. Control Students

	Teachers Mean (n=25)	Students Mean (n=404)	t Value	Probability
General Knowledge	7.2	4.8	5.86	.000
U. S. Locations	4.8	3.0	6.43	.000

Statements concerning student's and teacher's attitudes toward commercials on Channel are listed below followed by the percent indicating the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

The commercials on Channel 1 disrupted the classroom environment.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	10.6	8.1	19.6	17.8	43.6
Teachers	11.1	3.7	29.6	18.5	33.3

They are the kind of commercials that keep running through my mind after I've seen them.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	31.2	22.3	22.3	11.1	13.1
Teachers	7.4	37.0	25.9	18.5	11.1

The commercials reminded me that I'm dissatisfied with what I'm using now and I'm looking for something better.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	6.3	11.1	27.8	22.4	32.4
Teachers	3.7	3.7	11.1	25.9	55.6

I liked the commercials because they were personal and intimate.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	8.0	10.9	29.5	21.8	29.8
Teachers	11.1	18.5	29.6	7.4	33.3

I've seen these commercials so many times--I'm tired of them.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	31.5	19.1	27.4	9.7	12.4
Teachers	37.0	29.6	18.5	14.8	0.0

The commercials irritated me--they were annoying.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	13.3	9.7	23.0	23.5	30.5
Teachers	11.1	11.1	22.2	29.6	25.9

The products advertised on Channel 1 are approved by the teachers.

	Agree 1	2	3	4	5 Disagree
Students	15.7	17.1	40.8	11.8	14.7
Teachers	7.4	11.1	29.6	11.1	40.7

Conclusions

The fact that students exposed to Channel One were better able to position U. S. locations on a map than students not exposed to Channel One indicates that viewing Channel One is positively correlated with this geography skill. A possible explanation for this is the extensive use of maps and other graphics showing U. S. locations on the Channel One programs. The exposure to news and current events via Channel One could also explain the student's tendency to answer more questions correctly on current events although this finding was not significant at the .05 level as indicted above. Additional study in this area is need to fully assess the impact Channel One is having on students.

A majority of the students and of the teachers did not find the commercials disrupting to the classroom environment (61% and 52% respectively) or that the commercials were annoying (54% and 55% respectively). Although a majority of both groups indicated they were tired of the commercials (51% and 67%). These findings could be explained by amount of exposure students and teachers have to commercials in their daily life. People may be so accustomed to them they do not find them disruptive or annoying even though they do feel tired of them. In this respect, this study seems to indicate from Channel One has had very little impact on students or teachers. The finding that a much greater percentage of teachers indicated a level of "tiredness" with commercials could be explained by the fact that the commercials are directed at the age level of the students rather than adults.

A majority (54%) of students indicated the commercials were the kind that kept running through their mind tends to indicate the commercials are effective in getting the product into the student's thoughts. However, 55% of the students indicated that the commercials did not remind them they were looking for a better type of product. Fifty-one percent of the students also indicated they did not think the commercials were personal and intimate. This seems to indicate that consciously students were not looking at the commercials to change their buying habits.

When asked if they thought the products advertised on Channel One were approved by the teachers, the students gave no clear indication. The largest group (41%) was undecided on this issue with the remainder of the students being relatively evenly distributed in the other four categories. This may be one area that teachers will want to address in assisting students to become more informed consumers. Teachers may wish to indicated to students that even though a product is advertised in materials that are part of the curriculum, there does not necessarily mean the teachers have approved that product.

This study indicates that Channel One programming has had a small, but positive impact on students in a least one area of geography skills. At the same time, the commercials seem to be tolerated as a part of the packaging similar to the way commercials are viewed on commercial television. This might indicate a blurring of the lines in student's minds between formal education and other aspects of their lives.